Minutes of the Telephonic Meeting of the
Arizona Game and Fish Commission
Tuesday, April 22, 2014 – 1:00 p.m.
Arizona Game and Fish Department
5000 W. Carefree Highway
Phoenix, Arizona 85086

PRESENT: (Commission)

In person:
Commissioner Kurt R. Davis
Commissioner Edward "Pat" Madden

Via telephone:
Chairman John W. Harris
Vice Chairman Robert E. Mansell
Commissioner James R. Ammons

(Director's Staff)

In person:
Deputy Director Ty E. Gray
Assistant Attorney General Linda Pollock

Via telephone:
Director Larry D. Voyles
Assistant Attorney General Jim Odenkirk

Chairman Harris called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Deputy Director Gray conducted roll call and confirmed that all Commissioners were present. Several members of the public and several Department staff members were present. This meeting followed an agenda dated April 18, 2014.

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1. Alternative to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Proposed Revision to the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf.

Presenter: Jim deVos, Assistant Director, Wildlife Management Division

Mr. deVos presented the Commission with an alternative proposed by cooperating agencies to the USFWS proposed revision to the nonessential experimental population of Mexican wolf (Docket No. FWS-R2-ES-2013-0056). The Commission was provided with a copy of the proposed alternative (attached Draft 05 dated April 9, 2014) for review and consideration. This presentation was a follow up to a presentation at the April 11-12, 2014 Commission meeting, at which Mr. deVos presented a briefing on the alternative that was being developed by the cooperating agencies and stakeholders as well as a briefing on the status of the Arizona State Wolf Plan.

Mr. deVos provided an overview that included the following highlights:

The USFWS is developing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a new 10(j) rule that will probably re-shape how Mexican wolves are managed in the American southwest. Part of that process is to develop alternatives. As part of the process, the USFWS invited the cooperating agencies to develop an alternative. The alternative puts forth concepts that the cooperating agencies and stakeholders would like to see evaluated by the USFWS as they go through the process of the EIS. The USFWS will decide whether to include the alternatives submitted. If they accept the alternative, it will be incorporated into the EIS.

Key Elements of the Cooperating Agencies Alternative:

- The importance of Mexico is highlighted; About 10% of the historical Mexican wolf range occurs in Arizona and New Mexico and about 90% occurs in Mexico; Recovery can not be accomplished in Arizona and New Mexico alone; Historical range in the U.S can contribute to recovery
- It defines the habitat types that Mexican wolves occurred in, typically above about 4,000 feet elevation; Effective boundaries are I-40 to the north of Hwy 87 to the west
- Population goals are 200-300 animals; 100-150 in Arizona and 100-150 in New Mexico; Numbers are based on 3 wolves per 1,000 elk
- Maintaining genetic management is critical to wolf recovery
- Provides 5 steps to maintain 150: 1) Captive breeding; 2) Re-release in approved area; 3) Provide to Mexico; 4) Capture and euthanizing; and 5) Lethal removal
- Provides active management if population falls below 100
- Defines limits on livestock depredation tolerance, 3/365 days
- Defines upper limit of not more than 15% reduction of ungulate populations.

Commissioner Davis confirmed with Mr. deVos that the population goals and keeping the current 10(j) area as proposed, equates to three times the current number of wolves in the same amount of area.

Public Comment

Mike Sorum expressed concern about the arbitrary boundaries and trying to keep wolves within a certain area; suggests that the maximum numbers are questionable as well as the historical range.

Sandy Bahr, Chapter Director, Sierra Club – Arizona Chapter, urged the Commission to reject this proposal; expressed huge concerns about the alternative; the science is questionable; the numbers are questionable as are the boundaries; it does not meet the requirements of the Endangered Species Act; the Commission left out huge numbers of stakeholders and did not give adequate public notice for public participation.

Terry Johnson, representing Greenlee County, and informally about 82 other participating stakeholders and organizations, expressed support for the proposal. This alternative has been developed based on 20 years of experience with Mexican wolves on the ground. It affords management agencies the appropriate level of flexibility in managing Mexican wolves and also provides landowners, stakeholders, livestock industries and others that are affected by wolf presence with necessary certainty as to what kind of responses they will get from the management agencies under certain circumstances.

Motion: Madden moved and Mansell seconded THAT THE COMMISSION VOTE TO SUPPORT THE SUBMISSION OF THE PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE TO THE USFWS FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION AS THEY DEVELOP THE FINAL LANGUAGE FOR THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT.

Chairman Harris commented that he believes this recommendation is based on science and is socially acceptable, and most of all, it allows for a common sense approach to the reintroduction of the Mexican wolf.

Vote: Unanimous

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Chairman Harris adjourned the meeting.

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Meeting adjourned at 1:45 p.m.
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John W. Harris, Chairman

Robert E. Mansell, Vice Chair

Kurt R. Davis, Member

Edward "Pat" Madden, Member

James R. Ammons, Member

ATTEST:

Larry D. Voyles
Secretary and Director